

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: UNUSUAL SOUNDSCAPES: CHAMBER ENSEMBLES
OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND BEYOND
INVOLVING THE COLLABORATIVE PIANIST

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A Collaborative Pianist is constantly exposed to a variety of styles, soundscapes and ensemble combinations. Since the twentieth century proved to be the most musically diverse period in human history (and the twenty-first century continues that trend), it provided the most options to choose from while looking for so many varied sounds, combinations and styles in music. This recording project, while focusing on unusual ensemble combinations in music of the twentieth century and after, features both works that are strictly instrumental as well as works involving voice.

The first part of my dissertation focuses on Olivier Messiaen, who is inarguably one of the most influential and unique composers of this period. The works that I have chosen to discuss are the magnificent *Quatour pour la fin du Temps* (1941) and a lesser-known but nevertheless gorgeous chamber work, *La Mort du Nombre* (1930) for soprano, tenor, violin and piano. The other half of the dissertation focuses on American music: *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* (1978) by Lukas Foss, *Let Evening Come*

(1993) by William Bolcom, *Struwwelpeterlieder* op. 51 (1996) by Lowell Liebermann, and *The Platter of Discontent* by Marc Mellits (2004). The reason I have chosen works by American composers is due to the fact that after the World War II, the United States became the place to which many of the renowned European composers immigrated. Therefore, all the traditions that developed in Europe over centuries now continued to evolve in America.

The two CDs can be found in the Digital Repository at the University of Maryland (DRUM). Works by Messiaen are on CD1, recorded on June 16th, 2017 in Gildenhorn Hall at the University of Maryland with Amy Broadbent, soprano, Christian Hoff, tenor, Josh Henderson, violin, Emily Robinson, clarinet and Ismar Gomes, cello. Works by American composers are on CD2, recorded live between 2013 and 2016 with Laura Mitchell, soprano, Elliott Isaakson, viola, Julia Bullock, soprano, Fanya Wyrick-Flax, flute, Amy Garapic, percussion, Josh Henderson, violin, Anne Dearth, flute, Brad Cherwin, clarinet, Emma Schmiedecke, cello, and Yumi Tamashiro, percussion.

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by

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Dedication

To my father, Slavko Gligić.

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INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century in music was a period of constant shifts and unexpected turns while searching for new devices of expression. Boundaries of previous traditions were being pushed so far that there appeared a new question about what constitutes music: are all sounds music, or are some of them just sounds? Many composers experimented with the extramusical sounds: Olivier Messiaen, Edgard Varèse, Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, et al. The technological developments, specifically in the domain of electronics and acoustics, gave new possibilities that these composers were exploring. The invention of the Theremin, the ondes Martenot and the tape recorder, changed the view of sound drastically. All this, along with the emancipation of dissonance, departure from tonality and increasing exposure to other cultures with completely different musical traditions, led very quickly to changes in music composition and the expansion of techniques within traditional instruments.

Percussion instruments gained an importance that they never had before in classical music. Even other instruments began to produce percussive sounds. The colors and variety in sounds that they were able to produce was being demanded from other instruments as well. Woodwinds began to produce new effects of slap-tongue, whistle tones, muted sounds, and multiphonics, which is when more than one sound at a time is produced using false fingering and overblowing. Similar devices started being used in brass instruments. String instruments can be tapped or bowed on different spots on the body of the instrument, which creates various noises. The technique of preparing a piano has become almost common practice now. I personally find that the more I play new

music, the less I use keys, let alone sit on a bench. Such was my experience performing Lukas Foss' piece from 1978, which will be discussed later on.

The human voice is not exempt from new techniques or percussive qualities either. The ideal of classical vocal technique, Italian *bel canto* style, is merely a device in new music. So many other vocal effects that pose a threat to vocal health have become prevalent: growling, screeching, whispering, whining, exploding consonants, breathing heavily, etc. All of these create challenges for the continuous legato line. Rarely are there people who can find a way to build their career doing both traditional and contemporary repertoire. Usually singers are divided into new music singers or real operatic singers, in which the traditional side often doesn't take the new music side very seriously. In truth, to sustain a long-lasting career in new music is much harder since it is simply harder to keep one's vocal health, unless the singer has impeccable technique.

The relationship between a composer and a performer becomes vital. I am lucky enough to keep experiencing that relationship through my work with the Contemporaneous ensemble in NYC. Performing music written today can be a truly rewarding experience because a performer is, in part, a creator as well. Nevertheless, it can also be a challenging experience. The composers can oftentimes be too idealistic in their creation, not always realizing that there are more practical solutions that will lead to the same effect. It takes a strong and confident performer to help these ideas come to life and to help steer them away from being overly complex. Working on new music is a collaborative process that can teach both the composer and the performer much about how to approach and face new challenges with an open mind, fearlessness and genuine spirit.

MUSIC AFTER WORLD WAR II

World War II had extraordinary consequences on the human race. Everyone was involved in it, whether they chose to be or not, and everyone had to accept the inevitable political and geopolitical changes that resulted after the war ended. During the war, the European nations suffered incredible losses in culture and economy, but above all, in human lives: more than fifty million people were killed. Since Europe ended up weak and needed time to recover, new dominant political forces emerged: the US and the USSR, followed by the Communist China.

The political situation before the war imposed restrictions on every aspect of life. Arts suffered too. The freedom of artists to create was limited, and artists' lives were threatened depending on their cultural backgrounds and political views. Therefore, many of them emigrated to the United States, a safe haven from the war. Among them were Bartók, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Weill, Hindemith and Milhaud. Consequently, the musical traditions of Western civilization that, for the longest time, were so deeply rooted in Europe now continued to live and develop in America.

The second half of the century witnessed the rapid development of technology, particularly in transportation and communication, through telephones, radios, television and computers. The world started to feel smaller, and people became more connected and more aware of other nations and cultures. Globalization that resulted from our ability to travel easily, learn about other cultures and assimilate them into our own, created more of a sense of unity and started to erase the differences among people. Never before were people able to communicate instantly with others on the opposite side of the planet. Different cultures are assimilating into one through the process of cultural

homogenization. The most obvious musical product of that today is *world music*, which encompasses many different traditional musical styles from around the world, mixed with other popular or mainstream styles.

Art after the war went through an experimental, abstract phase, as if rebuilding itself from scratch. It emphasized basic elements: line, shape, single pitch, rhythm. Pierre Boulez said: “In 1945-46 nothing was ready and everything remained to be done: it was our privilege to make the discoveries and also to find ourselves faced with nothing – which may have its difficulties but also has many advantages” (Morgan 333). In the 1960s, many different musical styles started emerging almost parallel to one another: quotation music, ethnic music, minimalism, neo-tonality, etc. There was a constant search for something new without a strong sense of tradition or one particular style to follow. Some important changes in the society (alternative lifestyles, sexual emancipation, experimentation with drugs, interest in non-Western philosophies, etc.) contributed to creating diversity in music and all the arts.

One thing that was very obvious after the war was that popular music became more prominent than classical music. Perhaps people were looking for a more immediate expression that could be easily related to by a wider population. Post-war classical music went to extremes of experimentation in every single element of music, so that it became too difficult for an average listener to comprehend.

The music of the twentieth century started with the full-blown romanticism of Strauss and Wagner, the impressionism of French composers, the expressionism of the Second Viennese School, and the neo-classicism of Stravinsky, Shostakovich and Prokofiev. It continued through the serialism of Messiaen, Boulez and Stockhausen and

indeterminacy (chance in music) of Cage, eventually leading to the minimalism of Glass and Reich, and the rediscovery of tonality. Nowadays, there is a combination of literally every possible style available. New music is blending more and more with popular music idioms, through the mixing of acoustic and electronic instruments, and the extensive use of computers.

This dissertation will focus solely on compositions for acoustic instruments. Lukas Foss' piece does advise use of tape that repeats the vocalist's line at the end of the piece, but he also gives the option of replacing the tape with a backstage voice. In the live recording presented along with this dissertation, the choice was the second option, in which my own voice is heard instead of a tape.

MIXED CHAMBER ENSEMBLE AS THE NEW MUSIC MEDIUM

Joseph Machlis in his *Introduction to Contemporary Music* speaks about “new sounds from old instruments” and the importance of mixed chamber ensembles:

Perhaps stimulated in part by the novel sounds emerging from the electronic studios, a new cycle of coloristic inventions has marked recent writing for traditional instruments...Much of this adventurous growth has taken place in the context of the mixed chamber ensemble, which has become the predominant medium for new music (Machlis 457).

Indeed, the soundscapes have shifted drastically throughout twentieth century.

Composers have been looking for variety in every aspect, and there was no single standard in sound production. Composers and performers have been able to make their own impact and each set their own standards. This constant search for individuality became the motto of the whole era, and the mixed chamber ensemble proved to be the perfect medium. In a mixed ensemble, there can be a group of completely opposite entities either conflicting or complimenting one another, but no matter what the relationship, they coexist in the same musical universe, each of them a necessary and vital part of the whole.

Blending different sounds, like blending different personalities in life, can be quite difficult but is absolutely possible. It requires each individual member to be aware of themselves in relation to others. Through this awareness, they realize their own purpose in the whole. In the beginning, it may seem obscure, unclear, even disturbing to find yourself surrounded by so many sounds that are different than yours. Each time you play with a different group, you have to redefine yourself and find a new purpose. It is the process of constant search and development and it is never a dull path.

Throughout the twentieth century the use of voice as part of a chamber ensemble became common (for example in Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*). Most of the works, even if not with voice, use some kind of literary narrative or program, unlike the predominantly absolute music in previous eras. One could find mixed chamber ensembles before the twentieth century, but they were far less common (Mozart's Kegelstatt Trio K. 498 or Brahms' Horn Trio op.40). Works for unusual ensembles were most often the results of commissions, such as Bartók's *Contrasts* commissioned by the jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman, or unusual circumstances, such as Messiaen's *Quatour pour la fin du Temps*.

THE CONCEPT OF TIME IN MUSIC

...the passing of time is only experienced thanks to events that occur in temporal succession. By registering these events, which can be as little as the sounding of a new tone in a piece of music, we create a sense of “now” – framed by a sense of the “no-longer” and the “not-yet” – that is to say, we are able to experience a sense of present, past, and future. It is no coincidence that we speak of passages of music.

Preface to *Music in Time*, ix

Music, of all our creations, is about time. Music, shaping time, brings time’s transient presence into consciousness – making time palpable, as if hand-held.

Jeanne Bamberger: “Shaping Time” in *Music in Time*, 192

Rhythm and meter represent the skeleton of music, influencing the way the passage of time feels while listening. Almost all traditional music before the twentieth century was based on regular meter. Composers would then play with our perception by using different devices: rhythmic accents, hemiolas or irregular harmonic rhythm. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, composers such as Strauss and Wagner started using constant changes of meter and vagueness of harmonic movement so that we would lose our sense of time. With Stravinsky and composers that followed, the use of complex and mixed meter became common, and sometimes there were no metric markings at all. Furthermore, the harmony disappeared and the focus became individual notes and blocks of sound and color. The listeners would only be able to comprehend the individual soundscape of each piece and each composer, while constantly looking for a familiar sound or structure.

In some other cultures, particularly in the East, music doesn’t rely on the sense of meter or harmony but tends to have a more irregular pulse and a static, almost timeless quality. Many twentieth century composers, such as John Cage and Olivier Messiaen,

have adopted this freely flowing sense of time. In fact, the way East and West treat the passage of time in music could very well speak about the cultures themselves respectively – the West is often seen as organized and particular, whereas the East is considered more timeless and spiritual. Even though most of the Western music throughout history is organized within a clear meter, there are some examples of freedom of the musical flow, such as Gregorian chant, or the early Baroque monody, out of which the opera genre was formed. Monody was a style of accompanied singing which was done freely, by following the inflections of the words and phrases of the language, rather than keeping a strong and continuous pulse. Out of the monody became the *stile recitativo*, one of the most important elements of almost every opera to this day.

OLIVIER MESSIAEN

Messiaen is an extremely important figure in twentieth century music. As composers searched for new, tradition-breaking forms of expression, he was able to create a strong and clear individual style that remains timeless. His music is inspired by nature, by birdsong and by Catholic Religion. It has a very clear structure in terms of every detail of musical language that is best described in his own treatise from 1944: *Technique de mon langage musical*.

Born on December 10 in 1908 in Avignon, France, Messiaen was the child of a poet and a Shakespearean scholar. He started playing the piano and composing at an early age. When he was 10 years old, he discovered Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which had a huge influence on his compositional style. He entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1919 and studied there until 1930. Some of his teachers were Marcel Dupré and Paul Dukas. At the Conservatoire, he first encountered and studied Greek rhythms and the 120 Indian *deci-talas* – rhythmic formulas from various provinces of North India, as denoted in Sharngadeva's thirteenth-century music treatise *Sangita-Ratnakara* (Šimundža 53-73). These rhythmic formulas became some of the basic characteristics of Messiaen's music because of their ametrical character. The rhythmic pattern was built from the smallest rhythmical value, and our idea of the beat depends on it. This is the basis of Messiaen's concept of added values. Rhythm is the succession of free beats organized in different ametrical or asymmetrical ways, which include non-retrogradable (palindromes), augmentation and diminution.

Messiaen's concept of rhythm also has to do with the larger concept of time and universe that he is trying to reflect in his music. In his lecture at the "Conférence de Bruxelles" in 1958, Messiaen says:

Let us not forget that the first, essential element in music is Rhythm, and that Rhythm is first and foremost the change of number and duration. Suppose that there were a single beat in all the universe. One beat; with eternity before it and eternity after it. A before and an after. That is the birth of time. Imagine then, almost immediately, a second beat. Since any beat is prolonged by the silence which follows it, the second beat will be longer than the first. Another number, another duration. That is the birth of Rhythm.

Timothy Koozin interprets this in relation to Messiaen's religious feelings:

Messiaen's musical thought is a theological representation, and his image of the birth of time can be viewed as an analog for the creation in the book of Genesis... Messiaen's musical rhythm is not merely a closed system of temporal divisions, but rather a conception in which temporal events emerge from a background of infinite silence, pointing metaphorically to an awareness of the eternal (Koozin 186).

The same way the spiritual world is free from time and space, Messiaen's music is free from traditional concepts of rhythm. The lack of metrical division and harmonic direction makes his musical form fragmented. There is no sense of growth and development. The static quality of his music gives it almost otherworldly quality. His harmonies are based on his melodic language that is made up of seven modes of limited transposition (Appendix B). Messiaen was a synesthete, and colors had a huge importance to him. His chords are "sound entities" on their own and they sound tonal but blurred with extra notes that change their colors. In building the structures of his pieces, colors, dynamics and durations of notes were of great importance, since there was no harmonic movement or metrical organization in the traditional sense.

Messiaen considers his religious beliefs the most important aspect of his music and through it he wishes to express the truths of the Catholic faith. He claims that the nature of his religious symbolism is not mystical but theological. He states that his music reflects three most important subjects: Catholic faith (manifestation of God's love), the *Tristan* myth (human love) and nature (God's creation manifested through birdsong). All these are united in the idea of divine love. He gives symbolic importance to certain numbers, particularly the odd numbers that for him represent the divine because of the pure fact that like the deity, they can't be divided into equal parts.

Immediately after finishing his studies at the Conservatoire in 1930, Messiaen became the principal organist at La Trinité in Paris and held that position for forty years. He also taught at École Normale de Musique as well as at the Paris Conservatoire. He was mentor to major composers such as Boulez, Babbitt, Stockhausen and Xenakis. Major works with the use of serialism are his *Quatour*, *Visions de l'Amen* (1943) and *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant Jésus* (1944). His serialism doesn't come from a desire to be modern but it is a reflection of the relationship of music and mathematics. The effect of his music surpasses his technique.

Another hugely important aspect of Messiaen's music is birdsong. Messiaen spent a lot of his time in the wild notating the birdsong (without tape recorder). He was in fact a member of a few ornithological societies. He used birdsong in many of his compositions, especially later ones. His wife, pianist Yvonne Loriod, said that once, after she had already played his *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, she heard a bird in the wild and knew exactly which one it was, according to the melody of its song transcribed in the *Catalogue*.

La Mort du Nombre (1930)

This early chamber cantata doesn't yet show the fully developed musical language of Messiaen, but rather, the roots of his influences. It was composed while Messiaen was still a student at the Paris Conservatoire. It is scored for soprano, tenor, violin and piano and the words were written by Messiaen himself.

Each part of the ensemble is used with a clear purpose. The soprano sings the part of the "First Soul" which is uplifting and speaks of hope and encouragement. The "Second Soul," a tenor, is agitated, disturbed and talks about suffering and death. The violin is, at first, melancholic and desolate, and, at the end, comes back with a soaring, heavenly quality, joined by the soprano line, which speaks of hope and eternal springtime where there is no more suffering. The piano part reflects each of these characters and carries the music with enormous power.

There are clear influences of Debussy, Ravel and Wagner, especially in the last section. The work is reminiscent of *Tristan und Isolde* not only because it clearly uses the idea of the "love-death," but also because it carries the very same harmonies of "Liebestod": E major and B major. Here, the "love-death" relationship is used in a religious sense: the soul is freed from earthly sufferings through death and united with God in heaven. Messiaen later on explored this theme in his Tristan trilogy: the song cycle *Harawi*, *Turangalila-Symphonie*, and *Cinq Rechants* for twelve voices.

There are three major sections of *La Mort du Nombre*. The first one opens with an unaccompanied solo violin line, followed by a recitative-like melancholic line in the tenor voice. Then the exact same repetition of the opening violin solo is heard. This is where the second, agitated section begins with the tenor sounding in despair,

accompanied by the bulk of sound from the piano: triplets against four sixteenth-notes in chromatic motion, sounding menacing but inevitable. The tenor is interrupted twice with a short soprano line in a completely contrasting, calming mood. After describing his deeply pessimistic visions, the tenor ends with the three final outcries: “Je souffre!” (I suffer), after which the soprano simply and calmly responds: “Attends! espère!” (Wait! Hope!). Then the third and last part starts with the uplifting and peaceful solo violin melody, based on the interval of a major sixth, with the transparent cascades of sound in a steady and slow sixteenth-note flow in the piano part. The violin gives way to the soprano melody moving in a similar, calming motion in intervals of fifths and sixths. Soprano and violin join each other in the final duet, enveloped in the exuberant piano arpeggios, carrying them upward towards the climax of the piece. The soprano reaches a high B and the violin continues soaring higher, disappearing into a long, sustained pianissimo. It is as if a soul has been lifted from the earth and released into heaven. The texture of the piano part is very similar to that of the ending of Ravel’s *Jeux d’eau*.

Throughout music history particular intervals were used in connection with certain emotions or characters. In an online article by a sound healer, Simon Heather, the powerful characteristics and possibilities of intervals are discussed. Heather’s description of the interval of a major sixth seems to correlate to what Messiaen had in mind: “The sixth interval seems to carry no weight, no tension, no stimulation and no emotional heaviness. The sixth interval creates a feeling of total opening, of offering yourself to the universe...” (Heather).

In terms of composition, the structure of the piece is aligned within clear sections and clear meter markings. Messiaen was still relying on established traditions here.

Tonality is implied, and there is an obvious use of modes of limited transposition, particularly first and second. The title of the piece could be a hint on Messiaen's idea for the dissolution of time in his music, the "death of number" or regular meter.

LA MORT DU NOMBRE

Poème de Olivier Messiaen

2e âme

C'était un rayon de soleil qui dormait
dans ta main.
Tu levas très haut tes petits doigts.
Il se mit à briller d'un tel éclat
que je ne vis plus que lui.
Et il se déroula et devint si long
qu'il embrassait les quatre confins.
En montant il m'enveloppa
et me conduisit vers ton âme sereine.

Je suis encore très loin de toi.
Qui m'en éloigne davantage?
Pourquoi l'adieu?
Rien ne peut détruire le rêve!

1ère âme

L'eau dormante ne fuit pas la fleur, la
fleur qui la regarde.

2e âme

Je veux m'approcher.
Quelle force invisible m'arrête?
Pour qui ces liens?
Pour qui ces chaînes?
Je ne peux plus vouloir!
Pourrai-je monter ainsi cet escalier sans
fin?

1ère âme

Il faut dissoudre les nuées, combler les
océans.

DEATH OF NUMBER

Poem by Olivier Messiaen

2nd Soul

It was sunbeam that slept in your
hand.
You lifted on high your little fingers.
It started to shine with such brilliance
that I was blind to all else.
And it unwinded itself and became so
long
that it touched the four ends of the earth.
In its ascension it engulfed me
and conducted me toward your
untroubled soul.
I am still very far from you
Who can push me even further away?
Why this goodbye?
Nothing can destroy a dream!

1st Soul

Still waters do not flee from the flower
that looks at them.

2nd Soul

I want to go nearer.
What invisible force is stopping me
For whom these bonds?
For whom these chains?
I can no longer desire!
Could I thus tread this endless staircase.

1st Soul

We must dissolve the clouds, fill up the
oceans.

2e âme

O longue, ô triste attente!
 O souffrance, cercle de feu!
 Meurent le temps et l'espace!
 Loin la joie!
 Loin la lumière!
 Cloches d'horreur! Breuvage affreux!
 Mur qui m'écrase!
 La terre s'entr'ouvre, les astres croulent,
 Le monde est enseveli!
 La fin, la fin, qui la dira?
 Je souffre! Je souffre! Je souffre!

1ère âme

Attends! espère!
 Plus légers que des oiseaux de plumes,
 plus légers que le vide,
 plus légers que ce qui n'est pas,
 nous planerons au-dessus d'un rêve.
 Le poids du nombre sera mort.
 Il sera mort! mort!
 Entends le chant de notre âme unique!
 Clair sourire, regard pur, tremblante
 extase,
 il monte plus haut que cette âme
 et s'élance vers des clartés nouvelles,
 dans un éternel printemps.

2nd Soul

Oh long, oh sad awaiting!
 Oh torment, circle of fire!
 May time and space die!
 So far off, joy!
 So far off, light!
 Bells of horror! Horrible mixture!
 Wall that crushes me!
 The earth opens up, the stars fall,
 the world is swallowed up!
 The end, who can foretell it?
 I suffer! I suffer! I suffer!

1st Soul

Wait! hope!
 Lighter than feathered birds,
 lighter than emptiness,
 Lighter than nothingness,
 we will soar above a dream.
 The weight of numbers will be dead.
 It will be dead! dead!
 Listen to the song of our single soul!
 Diaphanous smile, limpid regard,
 trembling ecstasy.
 It rises higher than this soul
 and leaps toward new transparencies,
 In an eternal springtime.

English translation: Joseph Bain & Donald Winkler

Quatour pour la fin du Temps (1940)

If we were looking for a work defining Messiaen's style as described in detail in his *Technique de mon langage musical*, it would be his *Quatour*. The haunting history of the work, among other things, gives it timeless quality and is a proper reflection of its title. According to Messiaen, in his conversations with French musicologist Antoine Goléa (Goléa 64), this title has a double meaning – not only it is associated with the Apocalypse but also with his desire for the end of musical time based on the equal durational divisions of classical music (Johnson 61), as was mentioned in the previous discussion of *La Mort du Nombre*.

During World War II, Messiaen found himself imprisoned in the German concentration camp Stalag VIIIA, from 1940-1942. There, he met three French musicians: clarinetist Henri Akoka, violinist Jean Le Boulair and cellist Etienne Pasquier. He decided to write a piece for them – *Intermède*, which was to become the fourth movement of the *Quatour*. Then, he added the piano to the ensemble (playing himself) and wrote the rest of the piece so that the whole work had a total of eight movements. In his Preface to the *Quatour*, Messiaen explains: "Seven is the perfect number, the Creation of six days sanctified by the divine Sabbath: the 'seven' of this (day of) rest is prolonged through eternity and becomes the 'eight' of inextinguishable light, of perfect peace." Further along in the Preface, he explains each of the movements in an almost religious narrative. The descriptions are basically metaphors for the musical flow. He also gives a short guide to his rhythmical language.

The main inspiration for the *Quatour* is from Revelation of St. John, Chapter 10, verses 1-7, in which he describes a vision of a mighty angel descending down from

heaven, setting one foot on water and the other one on the ground, and with a trumpet announcing the end of time.

Quatour was premiered in the camp on January 15, 1941 in the presence of five thousand prisoners, with the cello missing a string and an upright out of tune piano with sticking keys. Nevertheless, Messiaen said to Goléa: “Never have I been listened to with such attention and understanding.”

Each movement of the *Quatour* has different instrumentation. The full quartet appears only in first, second, sixth and seventh movements. The third movement is for solo clarinet, the fourth one for the trio without piano, the fifth movement is for cello and piano and the eighth one for violin and piano. Messiaen uses the instruments and all of their possibilities in a programmatic way, in order to depict the stopping of time, religious ecstasy or birdsong. Each movement creates a different sound world.

Liturgie de cristal (Liturgy of Crystal), according to the Preface, describes the world between three and four o’clock in the morning and represents the harmonious silence of heaven. Musically, this is represented in the different roles of each instrument. The peaceful writing for the piano *très enveloppé de pédale* consists of a repetition of seventeen rhythmic values combined with a sequence of twenty-nine chords so that the two patterns overlap throughout the movement. The cello line is based on a non-retrogradable rhythmic pattern of fifteen values with a melodic pedal of five notes and it combines high harmonics with vibrato and glissando connecting the pitches. Above that, the violin and clarinet imitate birdcalls. The feeling of the movement is very static, and the early morning world depicted is not eventful. It simply exists in time.

Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps (Vocalise, for the Angel Who Announces the End of Time) is thematically linked to the seventh movement through its opening motif representing the Angel. There are two contrasting sections to this movement. The first one is very robust, with piano chords crashing in *fff*, the clarinet with its birdlike arpeggios and syncopated figures from the first movement and strings in unison playing sixteenth-note passages two octaves apart. Then suddenly, we are transferred to a distant plane of uplifting and timeless character, with the strings in the same unison arrangement above the downward cascades of chords, or rather, colors in the piano. The movement ends abruptly bringing back the motives from the opening section.

Abîme des oiseaux (Abyss of the Birds) is a solo clarinet movement restating previous motifs and exploring the incredible dynamic range of the instrument. Long notes seemingly start out of nowhere from barely audible *ppp* and grow over a long period of time to *fffff*. This requires extraordinary concentration and breath control from the performer and, at the same time, leaves the listener breathless. The movement describes the sadness of the abyss of Time, but in contrast to that there are birds who are “the opposite of Time; they are our desire for light, for the stars and for the things of heaven” (Preface to *Quatour*).

Intermède (Interlude) has a straightforward texture and the feeling of a dance. The first part is made up of simple rhythmic motifs in a unison melody of the three instruments without the piano. The melody itself has an Eastern quality because of the extensive use of the interval of the augmented second. The middle part is homophonic and playful as the melody and the accompanying figures interchange between the

instruments. Motifs from previous movements are heard, and some new motifs are brought in that are explored further in the sixth movement.

Louange à l'éternité de Jésus (Praise to the Eternity of Jesus) is a slow, ecstatic movement for cello and piano. It is an homage to Jesus as the eternal Word of God, written in the key of E major, which to Messiaen has the character of praise. The hardest part about performing this movement is keeping the energy going forward while keeping the tempo slow and steady, similarly to the last movement.

Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes (Dance of Fury, for Seven Trumpets) is another movement with the character of a dance. Messiaen himself says in the Preface that this is the most rhythmically characteristic movement, with the use of added rhythmic values, non-retrogradable rhythms, augmentation and diminution. All four instruments are constantly in unison. The trickiest part about performing this movement is feeling the small beat (sixteenth-note) together, especially in the middle *pp* section with long notes of added values and in non-retrogradable rhythmic structures. Here, the focus is shifted from instrumentation and color to pure rhythm and dynamics with sudden fast shifts of registers. The main theme is based on Mode 1 (Appendix B), which is a whole-tone scale. The tonic center is F#.

Fouillis d'arcs-en-ciel, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps (Cluster of Rainbows for the Angel Who Announces the End of Time) is the movement thematically connected to the second movement. It begins with a slow section of the cello melody accompanied by the steady flow of chords in the piano going up and down the register, creating a small rainbow shape each time, both visually (in the score) and aurally. Then another, robust section begins with the same motif of the Angel from the beginning of the

second movement. This movement is very rhythmic and full of colors and effects coming from different instruments. The same piano chords from the slow section of the second movement appear here, but louder, faster and more decisive. The last section is marked *extatique*. The opening cello theme comes back in a high register, with trills and in *fff*. Meanwhile, piano has swooping arpeggios that on the page look faster than they are, but in fact, they are very slow and sustained. It is like all of heaven is rejoicing in slow motion. It is magnificent how Messiaen manipulates our feeling of the passing of time.

Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus (Praise to the Immortality of Jesus) is the last movement, and another ecstatic movement in E major, this time for violin and piano. The same musical and performance challenges are evident here as those of the fifth movement: long sustained lines in the violin and stretches of slowly repeated chords in the piano. This movement reflects on Jesus as a man who has risen to immortality. In the very last section, there is a climactic point in which the music gets slower, higher and louder. Then, the built-up tension gradually releases, floating into the higher registers of both instruments. The dynamics get softer until the last sound of E major is completely extinguished, and time and space have disappeared.

Personally, I find that the best way to perform this piece is to allow yourself to surrender to the flow of time and trust that it will carry you forward, rather than trying to control the flow. Performing the *Quatour* could be a real transcendent experience.

One can only imagine the power this work had during its premiere in the concentration camp. In the midst of all the terror, uncertainty, cold and hunger, Messiaen provided a fraction of time that was beyond this world, beyond all human suffering, and transported everyone to a place of peace, joy and hope.

LUKAS FOSS

Lukas Foss was a versatile musician who enriched every environment with his talent, ideas and energy. An established pianist, composer, conductor and teacher, he held many different institutional positions throughout his life in America.

Foss was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1922. There, he started studying the music of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. When his family moved to Paris to escape the Nazis in 1933, he continued studying with teachers from Paris Conservatoire. In 1937 his family finally moved to America and he immediately got accepted into the Curtis Institute, where he graduated in piano, composition, orchestration and conducting. He went on to study at Tanglewood with Koussevitzky and Hindemith, both of whom were extremely impressed with the young talent. Koussevitzky made him his assistant at Tanglewood and Hindemith invited him to be his student at Yale. After Foss discovered Stravinsky and started identifying with him, Hindemith threw him out of his class and later on said to Koussevitzky: “Foss wants to know everything but not to follow” (Perone 3).

Foss became well known for his cantata *The Prairie* on a poem by Sandburg. It was first performed by the Collegiate Chorale under Robert Shaw in 1944 in New York. His international acclaim grew because of his Piano Concerto No. 2 that he performed in Venice in 1951 as the soloist.

In 1953, he was appointed a professor of music at UCLA, succeeding Schoenberg. During his time in California, he became the director of Ojai Music Festival and conducted the first six-hour marathon concerts at the Hollywood Bowl with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Then, he moved on to the position of Conductor and Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. He started programming old and new

music together in concerts, which at first brought popularity but then started alienating audiences. He went on to direct the Jerusalem Symphony, Brooklyn Philharmonic and the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. He also taught at the New York State University of Buffalo, the Manhattan School of Music, Harvard University and Boston University. Foss spent a great deal of his life fighting for and explaining the importance of new music. He received many awards for his lifelong commitment in serving and developing the American music scene, as well as for his adventurous programming. He died in 2009 in New York City at the age of 86.

His early compositional period was in a clear, tonal, neo-classical style. Most of his solo piano works, including his piano concerti, were written during this time. His *Psalms*, *Song of Songs*, and *Ode to Orchestra* all belong to the neo-classical style. Shortly after he assumed the position at UCLA, Foss started moving into the experimental realm. At UCLA he founded the Improvisational Chamber Ensemble (piano, cello, clarinet and percussion), mostly for the benefit of his students. Naturally, the ensemble became a platform for him to explore new ideas. Foss started experimenting with atonality, serialism, indeterminacy and chance in music, using diagrams and charts instead of traditional notation, in hopes of giving his students the sense of freedom they wouldn't be able to explore through traditional notation. He also wanted to bridge the gap between composer and performer. He discussed this relationship in his essay "The Changing Composer-Performer Relationship: a Monologue and a Dialogue" (Schwartz 325), while bringing up issues about whether the performers should be asked to improvise and about what kind of notation would give the most direction and most freedom to express an idea. He argues that too precise a notation can put a performer in a "strait jacket". As an

example, he writes out the effect of a rubato using very precise rhythm, so that there is no freedom of movement. Then, he compares it to simply writing equal note values and marking *rubato* over them, so that the performers can take their own time in any given moment. In an ensemble performance, he believes that musicians shouldn't be focusing on their own part isolated in time from everyone else, hoping that they will fit in. They should react to each other and be aware of everyone else's musical gestures around them:

I am convinced that genuine coordination must ultimately be obtained via 'reaction', in other words, via *musical* points of reference, via listening and playing accordingly. Such interplay would constitute a task capable of engaging the performer's entire musical being (Schwartz 331).

Later on, Foss dismissed his ensemble because he felt that improvisation per se didn't feel adventurous anymore. He turned to controlled improvisation using all the skills that he had acquired in his years of improvising. Controlled improvisation involves passages of music clearly notated in a way that ultimately leaves their materialization up to the performer.

Foss wrote for many genres throughout his life. His music is mostly programmatic, with the exception of his concerti, four symphonies and a small number of solo piano works. He wrote music for several ballets and operas, numerous choral and vocal works, but his largest output was in the domain of mixed chamber ensembles. Criticized for going from style to style, Foss explained: "I would agree that my curiosity has led me absolutely everywhere. But I make one qualification: I've never done anything at the OK time. In other words, I've never been a bandwagon jumper. I've never belonged to any school. I've never written a twelve-tone piece when it was fashionable to do so" (Tobin 159).

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird (1978)

Foss wrote this cycle upon the request from radio station WMFT in Chicago. He chose the poem by Wallace Stevens of the same name because of its “humor, mystery, and above all, imagery” (Sutterfield viii). The poem has thirteen stanzas and Foss’ setting has thirteen sections. They flow seamlessly from one to another each bringing a new material or technique.

In my experience, performing this piece was exactly the act of each performer reacting to musical gestures in a clearly laid out succession of events. Foss’ score looks daunting at first. It’s a mixture of notes, symbols and instructions. On the very first page, he provides an explanation of the instrumentation, and a notation guide. Since there is no standard notation for works like this, Foss makes space in the score to clarify his intentions to the performers. His score is very visual, and all the events are clearly juxtaposed. The pictorial notation is meant to easily explain the shape and the direction of the sound Foss has imagined. The duration of some fermatas, instrumental sections or held notes is clearly marked in the score with the number of seconds above them. The bar lines are used only to mark sections or to show where the next new event occurs. There are many different non-traditional techniques used within each instrument, including voice.

The singer is asked to sing both vibrato and non-vibrato with occasional whispering (that contains a small amount of speech tone), as well as shouting and *Sprechstimme*. Whispering should be done with a little bit of speech tone. In section III, he asks the vocalist to sing with indeterminate pitches. He only marks note stems that show rhythm and shape but not an actual pitch. In section XI, he first wants the singer to

shout in rhythm on a non-specified pitch, and then sing the same rhythmic phrase. In the very last number, there is an “echo effect” that should be accomplished with the use of two tapes: one recording the voice and the other one playing back three seconds later. As a substitute for tape recorders, he suggests the use of a backstage voice. The second option was the one chosen for this recording project.

The percussionist is doing everything inside the piano: using tape-covered triangle beaters to hit the strings, scraping two cowbells (small and large) across the strings, dropping, throwing and rumbling two metal bowls (small and large) on the strings from different heights and at different places, striking the inside of the piano with the superball mallet, etc. Outside of the piano, the percussionist is playing the flexaton and the Jew’s-harp. Foss provides lots of graphic and verbal instructions along the score.

In the piano part, there are two different pedal markings: *RP* for right pedal and *MP* for middle (sostenuto) pedal. The piano must have sostenuto pedal because of the very specific technique: while holding the middle pedal, the pianist inaudibly depresses certain keys that allow only the corresponding strings to vibrate upon strumming them. The effect is similar to a harp arpeggio. Foss marks specific way of strumming the strings – “use flesh” or “use nails,” as well as the direction for strumming the strings. This activity presents one of the bigger challenges for the pianist because different pianos have different points at which the metal braces of the instrument divide the strings. What one practiced in a rehearsal will probably be very different at the performance venue. The example of this effect is in the very first piano gesture in the score: there is a chord with an *N* above it, which is the symbol for inaudibly depressed keys.

The pianist and percussionist work as a team, since most of the action happens inside the piano and it can sometimes create traffic. Planning where to drop a bowl while the percussionist is playing on the strings, and vice versa, is yet another thing to keep in mind when in the performance. There is a lot of choreography in the piano part itself. In a way, the piano is treated as a percussion instrument here, and there is very little traditional playing involved. Personally, I spent most of the time standing bent over the piano desk at an awkward angle because I had to use the pedals, the keyboard and the inside strings simultaneously. Some muscle work was quite necessary. It was also necessary to write the cues for where to sit and where to stand into my score, since certain passages were not possible unless played from the appropriate position.

The flute part has a lot of extended techniques as well: multiphonics, sound-bending, air-blowing, flutter-tongue, harmonics, whirling sounds, key clicks, as well as playing approximate pitches in a given visual/rhythmic shape. In the end of the very first section, Foss asks the flute to create the high B above staff using three different fundamental tones. His image is “the moving eye of the blackbird.” Since this is not heard, it serves more as an explanation of the idea. Foss calls a specific group of notes “grace notes” and asks them to be performed as fast as possible. An example of that is in section III on page 5 in the score. He marks key clicks with an “x” instead of a pitch and gives a written instruction. Just before section VI on page 7, the flutist is asked to play and sing in unison and then to play multiphonics “à la morse code.” Foss gives his own suggestion for the fingering. Multiphonics are hard to produce and even harder to keep consistent; this is only one of many challenges for the flute player in this piece.

In section X, there is an example of controlled improvisation: a thirty-second long duet between the percussion and the flute. Foss gives a sample of the texture, rhythm, dynamics and gestures, but he wants the performers to improvise. The same texture continues as the voice and piano join in. There are key points (cues) to observe in each part by each of the performers so that no one loses track of where they are in the improvisation. The flutist has to manage to give the beginning pitch to the singer while improvising, which requires some really good non-verbal communication between the two performers. This section in general requires a lot of group awareness. The final part of Section X should be synchronized in rhythmic unison between the flute and the percussion.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird is a true chamber work with voice treated as an equal to the instruments. The sound world is unique, and all the parts are absolutely essential in telling the story and creating the atmosphere. The structure of the piece depends on the interplay between the parts.

Obviously, the structure of the whole song cycle corresponds to the strophes of the poem, and its musical content is inspired by the imagery of the words. The poem was written in 1917 by Wallace Stevens and published in his first major collection of poems in 1923, *Harmonium*. Stevens' poetic language is concerned with the realm between imagination and reality. It is full of color, humor, unusual words, images and sounds. This particular poem has thirteen stanzas in free verse with different content and imagery but all of them somehow relate to the blackbird. It is thirteen different views of the same subject over a span of time. Unusual words such as "equipage" or sentences such as "He rode over Connecticut in a glass coach" create images that are extremely vivid but almost

impossible to make sense of. Stevens himself said in one of his letters (Sutterfield 56) that he wasn't going for the ideas but for the sensations.

Both Foss and Stevens approached their languages with open minds, independent from any school or established style. They achieved unity in diversity through constant use of various devices that re-appear throughout their works in many different forms. The way Foss uses expanded techniques and timbres is parallel to Stevens' way of using interesting-sounding words. Foss explores the images and possibilities of Stevens' language through musical devices by sometimes repeating the text with different accents. For example, in section II, the verse "I was of three minds" is repeated twice with accenting a different word each time. Similarly he plays with the words "Connecticut" and "equipage" in section XI.

For Foss, text comes before music. Through music, he is reflecting different images that he finds in the text. A very simple representation of that is in section III where the vocal line on "the blackbird whirled" is immediately followed by a whirling effect in the flute. Section VI is similarly descriptive with a lot of action in repetitive and piercing sounds in the flute and piano under "Icicles filled the long window with barbaric glass." There is a five-second fermata and a sudden change of texture where the solo voice says: "the mood" in the style of *Sprechstimme*, followed by a whisper: "traced in the shadow." The next line, "an indecipherable cause," is sung, free flowing from high Gb to low A, accompanied in unison with a pizzicato in the piano. The flutist takes over the transition to number VII with bending the pitches to a quarter tone or a half tone away. The voice comes in with an almost Eastern-sounding melody on "O thin men of Haddam" and the percussionist slides the superball mallet inside the piano, which creates

a distinct wailing sound. The piano has only a few string arpeggios, and the last quarter note figure resembles the footsteps mentioned in the verse “Do you not see how the blackbird walks around the feet of the women about you?” The whole section sounds very exotic and mysterious. The very last section XIII has the images of snowfall and quietness, which is achieved through long silences and very little movement in the music. The flute is only blowing the air without any pitch, the voice is whispering or singing with an echo following it, and the piano has arpeggios on the strings and pizzicati. The flute ends the piece almost with a question mark, mysteriously blowing the air between F and B, the interval of a tritone.

Even though it seems that the material throughout the piece is randomly assembled, it is actually quite connected and thoughtfully planned. The whole piece seems to be based on a motif of a tritone. An important melodic construction of four pitches in intervals of a second, followed by a third, and then another second, appears throughout the piece as a melody or as part of a cluster in the piano. Those basic pitches are F-G-B-C. This motif becomes almost like a scale that is the basis of melody and harmony. It is sometimes transposed and sometimes the “fourth degree” is raised to C# (or to another pitch respectively). At the very beginning of the piece we hear a C major chord with a B-F tritone above. Then, the flute and the voice have a gesture/melody based on the pitches of the said scale, with the addition of F#. This “scale” appears in full at the end of section III in “it was a small part of the pantomime,” immediately repeated in the left hand of the piano. With a raised “fourth degree,” it becomes a construction of two superimposed tritones: F-B plus G-C#. This appears again in a transposed version in section IV on the words “and a blackbird,” then again in number VII as part of a cluster in the piano

arpeggio, during the vocal lines “why do you imagine” and “walks around the feet of the women about you,” including the imitation of the footsteps in the piano. Parts of this motif can be found in every section, even in section XI, which sounds the most neo-classical and tonal. It is also the very last motif that appears in all of the parts at the end of the piece.

The way Foss approaches time in this piece is completely free. Even though the durations of notes, rests and fermatas are specified, there is no common denominator as in the case of Messiaen, who used a small note value as the basis of the total musical flow. Foss’ music concerns mostly space, as in the distances between gestures. Unless there is a clear rhythmic structure that keeps repeating or “holding the fort” in the ensemble, our sense of time has no structure. We can only rely on the isolated sound events that happen freely in time.

Foss never wanted to be labeled as a specific type of composer. His expression is ever changing, depending only on the idea or sensation he is trying to convey. In making *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*, Foss used any and all composition techniques available to him to be able to express the visual ideas that the poem sparked in his imagination. In an interview with David Thomas, Foss said “It is my opinion that the more techniques a composer employs, the richer his or her vocabulary will be... I like to use all available techniques, because that makes the music more adventurous” (Sutterfield 73).

THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT A BLACKBIRD

Poem by Wallace Stevens

I

Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV

A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

V

I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

VI

Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable cause.

VII

O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden birds?
Do you not see how the blackbird
Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?

VIII

I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

X

At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

XI

He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

XII

The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

XIII

It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.

WILLIAM BOLCOM

William Bolcom crosses over between classical and popular idioms with such ease that the lines between the two are almost indistinguishable and they assimilate into a style that is his very own, incorporating everything from serialism to popular music.

Born in Seattle in 1938, he started studying composition and piano at the age 11, at the University of Washington. He received his Master of Arts degree at Mills College as a student of Milhaud and his doctorate at Stanford University, studying with Leland Smith. Then he went on to study with Messiaen at the Paris Conservatoire, where he received the *2ème Prix de Composition*. His early style involved serial techniques inspired by Stockhausen, Berio and Boulez. After 1960 he opened up to a variety of styles and his goal became to erase boundaries between classical (in a broader sense) and popular music. Maybe the best example of this idea is *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1981), a three-hour long song cycle on poems by William Blake, set for nine soloists, chorus and large orchestra that includes jazz, rock and pop musicians. It took Bolcom twenty-five years to finish it. He was seventeen when he started. A multitude of styles and genres are found here: tonal classical style, pentatonic scales, bluegrass, folk music, country, soul, rock and reggae. The instruments correspond to that: classical instruments, saxophone, electric guitar and bass, electric violin, harmonica, joined with country, rock and folk singers. The *Naxos* recording of this work won four Grammy Awards in 2005.

In an article from 1990 in “Something About the Music” (Schwartz 481), Bolcom expresses his frustration about the divisions between popular and concert music causing neither of the groups to benefit from the other: “To answer your question, ‘What does one

mean by the *serious* music scene', this is, I assure you, not my own original term; in fact I hate it, as it implies that everyone not in it is not serious – popism, I suppose; it's almost racist." He indicates that he feels that we need to evolve with the times and stop holding on to the familiar without accepting the inevitable future. Otherwise, we are living in the past. On the other hand, Bolcom is delighted to see new generations of composers embracing their heritage, now largely influenced by popular music, which they are incorporating into their "classical" compositions.

Bolcom has composed four operas (*McTeague*, *A View from the Bridge*, *A Wedding* and *A Dinner at Eight*), nine symphonies, several musicals, eleven string quartets, chamber music, choral and vocal works, cabaret music and ragtime music. As a pianist, he performed and recorded his own works in collaboration with his wife and musical partner, mezzo-soprano Joan Morris. They primarily perform cabaret songs, show tunes and American popular songs of the twentieth century. They have recorded twenty-five albums together. Bolcom has taught composition at the University of Michigan School of music from 1973 until 2008, when he retired. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1988 for his *Twelve New Etudes for Piano*.

Let Evening Come (1993)

In a preface to the score Bolcom explains the origin of this song cycle (or cantata, as he calls it). At first it was supposed to be a duet for two singers, Tatiana Troyanos and Benita Valente. Tatiana unexpectedly died, and the commissioners, the Lincoln Center Productions and the Gloria Narramore Moody Foundation, asked if Bolcom would continue with the idea and have a trio of soprano Benita Valente, pianist Cynthia Raim and violist Michel Tree. The viola was to represent the departed Tatiana. Thus, Bolcom chose the poems that deal with the subject of death and the acceptance of it: Maya Angelou's *Ailey, Baldwin, Floyd, Killens and Mayfield*, Emily Dickinson's '*Tis Not that Dying hurts us so*, and Jane Kenyon's *Let Evening Come*. Angelou's poem is concerned with the loss of many artists of African-American heritage and the impact of their deaths on the world. Dickinson's poem compares life to death, where life is the real struggle, and Kenyon's poem views death as a resolution and comfort. Even though there are only three poems, there are four movements in the cycle, with the added *Interlude* for viola and piano. As Bolcom says, this Interlude is not a ghostly recreation of Tatiana's spirit, but a gateway to the "coming of evening" (Preface to the Score).

In general, Bolcom is not trying to reflect and paint each word or section of the poem using different musical devices the way Lukas Foss did. He instead picks one mood and maintains it with subtle and minimal shifts. The exception to that are a few moments in the last song which will be discussed. Bolcom's music is metrically organized in a traditional way.

AILEY, BALDWIN, FLOYD, KILLENS, AND MAYFIELD

Poem by Maya Angelou

When great trees fall,
rocks on distant hills shudder,
lions hunker down
in tall grasses,
and even elephants
lumber after safety.

When great trees fall
in forests,
small things recoil into silence,
their senses
eroded beyond fear.

When great souls die,
the air around us becomes
light, rare, sterile.
We breathe, briefly.
Our eyes, briefly,
see with
a hurtful clarity.
Our memory, suddenly sharpened,
examines,
gnaws on kind words
unsaid,
promised walks
never taken.

Great souls die and
our reality, bound to
them, takes leave of us.
Our souls,
dependent upon their
nurture,
now shrink, wizened.
Our minds, formed
and informed by their
radiance,
fall away.
We are not so much maddened
as reduced to the unutterable ignorance
of dark, cold
caves.

And when great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always
irregularly. Spaces fill
with a kind of
soothing electric vibration.
Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be
better. For they existed.

The first song opens with a grand majestic pedal of chords based on Eb minor with an added Fb. The chords move throughout all the registers of the piano. The viola joins in with the theme sounding in Eb Phrygian mode, with a hint of a pentatonic scale. The voice repeats the theme. The harmony shifts to other tonal centers and becomes more and more ambiguous. The musical language is very chromatic and full of accidentals and

clashing intervals that, in relation to the environment, don't sound especially unusual. The piano moves steadily in chords, while the voice is telling the story in a declamatory style, with the help of the viola which is either commenting or propelling the action. Like Angelou's poem, Bolcom's setting is full of restlessness, breaths, commas and long thoughts that quickly interchange with sudden short ones. He seems to switch to 3/4 meter when he needs to express agitation. Throughout the song, there are sudden changes of dynamics and registers, and the sections go back and forth from very present and sturdy declamation to an almost otherworldly, distant monody, as if the souls mentioned are searching for their final place of rest but are held back by something in this world — maybe our unwillingness to accept their departure? The otherworldly sounds are created with the help of the soft vocal line, while viola plays high harmonics (Score pg. 3, bars 23-30). For a short while, the piano and viola switch roles in the lamenting section that starts on page 4 in bar 37. The section builds up quickly and explodes madly into a vocal outcry: "We are not so much maddened as reduced to the unutterable ignorance of dark, cold caves." Bolcom crosses out some of the pitches, which suggests the possibility of emphatic declamation instead of singing.

The final section is the acceptance, but still not a peaceful one, as reflected in the constant agitated sixteenth-note figures of the viola part. The voice goes down to a whisper and slowly regains confidence while saying words of comfort and hope: "We can be. Be and be better." The viola brings back the hypnotic sound of high harmonics, the piano chords slowly dilute into bare octaves on a G and voice joins in with its final phrase: "For they existed." The *segue* marking at the end of the movement shows that the piece should continue into the next movement without a break.

‘TIS NOT THAT DYING HURTS US SO

Poem by Emily Dickinson

‘Tis not that Dying hurts us so —
 ‘Tis Living — hurts us more —
 But Dying — is a different way —
 A Kind behind the Door —

The Southern Custom — of the Bird —
 That ere the Frosts are due —
 Accepts a better Latitude —
 We — are the Birds — that stay.

The Shiverers round Farmers’ doors —
 For whose reluctant Crumb —
 We stipulate — till pitying Snows
 Persuade our Feathers Home.

Dickinson’s poem is full of metaphors. It is describing death as something unknown — “behind the door.” Unlike the birds that fly out South to find a better home (“a better Latitude”) when the snow falls, “we are the birds that stay,” meaning: we are not ready to let go of suffering that is familiar to us (“Living”) and go into the unknown (“Dying”). The mysterious, yet peaceful quality of the poem is reflected in Bolcom’s setting.

The opening hocket between the piano and viola is based on a motif of a two-note interval (mainly a sixth) going upward, with each first note as a pick-up that comes after a rest. The motivic grouping of the first phrase in the piano part is repeated in the voice part that takes over the hocket with the viola: the pick-up note stays the same while the interval progressively diminishes from a sixth to a third. This kind of grouping reappears throughout the movement in many variations.

The setting of the first stanza is in B minor, and structurally, this is a clear eight-bar phrase. The harmony suddenly shifts in bar 10, and it seems to go towards F# minor. Basically, this is the beginning of the development section without a clear tonal center. The motivic interval is augmented and diminished, then grouped in bigger sections and repeated. The material accumulates until bar 19 where viola and piano stop and leave the voice completely alone in bar 20. The final section which is the setting of the last stanza begins in bar 21 with the variation of the hocket in the tonality of F# minor. The harmony soon becomes ambiguous and, through several passing tonalities, leads us back to B minor for the last section of the song. The piece ends with the viola holding an open fifth B-F#, while the piano plays with the main motif, diminishing it and disappearing into a *ppp*.

Interlude

This movement is marked *attacca* after the last fermata. It starts with the viola pick-up in the last bar of the previous song; therefore, it is clearly meant to be connected to it. The musical material of the interlude is made up of motifs and textures of the two songs preceding it, and is completely atonal. Its gestures, tempo changes, push and pull effects, along with the extreme chromaticism and lack of tonal center, resemble the style of the European expressionists of the early twentieth century.

The tempo marking “Slow - - - - to - - - fast, with violent emotion” describes the agitation and restlessness of the character of the Interlude. In relation to its placement in the cycle and the overall theme, this could be a musical representation of a soul searching for its final place of rest.

It is quite remarkable how Bolcom manages to transition so quickly and seamlessly from a completely unstable atonal realm made up of an agitated succession of motifs into the pure tonality, simplicity and peacefulness of the last song. He does this by introducing two diatonic chords at the end of the interlude — A \flat major and D major. They appear in the right hand of the piano, while the left hand continues with chromaticism, and the viola holds an octave pedal on a D that continues into the last song. These chords become the Neapolitan chord (A \flat major) and the dominant chord (D major) that resolve into G major on the very first beat of the new song.

LET EVENING COME

Poem by Jane Kenyon

Let the light of late afternoon
shine through chinks in the barn, moving
up the bales as the sun moves down.

Let the cricket take up chafing
as a woman takes up her needles
and her yarn. Let evening come.

Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned
in long grass. Let the stars appear
and the moon disclose her silver horn.

Let the fox go back to its sandy den.
Let the wind die down. Let the shed
go black inside. Let evening come.

To the bottle in the ditch, to the scoop
in the oats, to air in the lung
let evening come.

Let it come, as it will, and don't
be afraid. God does not leave us
comfortless, so let evening come.

This last song is written in a steady 7/4 meter, with an overall laid-back feeling. It begins with a long duet between the viola and piano. The melodic fragments in the viola seem almost improvised over the ostinato pedal on a G in the left hand of the piano and a melodic motif of parallel sixths in the right hand. Bolcom suggests the feeling of 3+4 in

the beginning, although he changes it several times in different sections of the piece. The meter itself doesn't change.

The piano ostinato stops at bar 30, where the viola begins a rhythmic motif involving harmonics, probably imitating the cricket that the voice is mentioning over a bouncing staccato phrase in the following bar: "Let the cricket take up chaffing." A short ostinato section appears with the viola taking over the melody in parallel sixths. This section is followed by the new change of texture, where now the voice has a rhythmic ostinato with a choice of pitch between E \flat and B \flat , the viola has long notes and the piano a forward flowing eighth-note pattern, interrupted by an upward arpeggio on the word "moon." The tempo becomes a bit faster from here on, and the character mischievous, with sixteenth-note outbursts in the piano, pizzicato in the viola and staccato in the vocal line at the mention of a fox: "Let the fox go back to its sandy den." The tempo changes that lead back to the section in the original tempo with the original material are marked very clearly. This time around, the viola plays parallel sixths and the piano has an ostinato on a G in the left hand and fragments of the melody in the right hand. The voice begins the second to last stanza, which is the only irregular one since it doesn't begin with "Let." The rhythm corresponds to the character of the words: *parlando* sixteenth-notes on "To the bottle in the ditch..." immediately contrasted by very long notes that bring the ensemble to the culmination in *ff*. The last stanza is set in a peaceful Adagio with solemn and soft chords in the opposite registers of the piano. The viola interjects occasionally, with the use of harmonics. The voice is set unusually high. Bolcom asks the soprano to do a "*pp possibile*" while singing the word "God" on a high B \flat . The cycle ends peacefully and quietly as a contrast to its robust beginning.

LOWELL LIEBERMANN

Liebermann is one of the most performed and recorded American composers of today. His music is the perfect mixture of old and new with a good balance of lyricism and drama. Born in 1961 in New York, he started studying piano at the age of 8 and composition at the age of 14. Two years later, he made his Carnegie Hall debut performing his own Piano Sonata Op.1. He studied piano, conducting and composition at the Juilliard School of Music, where he eventually received a doctorate in 1987. He was the youngest recipient of the Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Institute of Arts and Letters. Currently, he is teaching composition at Mannes College The New School for Music.

So far, Liebermann has written more than a hundred works in all genres, including two operas: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, premiered in 1996 in Monte Carlo and *Miss Lonelyhearts*, commissioned by the Juilliard School as part of the hundredth anniversary of the institution. Among his most popular works are: *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, *Piano Concerto No.2*, *Second Symphony*, *Gargoyles* for piano, *Concerto for Flute and Orchestra* and *Concerto for Piccolo and Orchestra*. He recently wrote music for the ballet *Frankenstein*, which was co-produced by the San Francisco Ballet and the Royal Opera Ballet.

The structure and tonal approach of Liebermann's works is traditional, but his harmonies are adventurous. He often plays with bitonality and polytonality. Stephen Hough, the pianist who premiered his first two piano concertos, wrote in his commentary on the Hyperion label that recorded these pieces: "Unlike the reactionary who looks backward *at* tradition, Liebermann looks forward *with* tradition, confidently employing

modern techniques alongside materials of the past with a refreshing lack of self-consciousness or anxiety” (Reilly 206).

Inspired by the old masters of composing, Liebermann often pays tribute to them by quoting them in his own works. In the finale of his *Concerto for Piccolo and Orchestra*, he quotes Mozart’s Symphony No. 40, Beethoven’s *Eroica*, Sousa’s *The Stars and Stripes Forever*, and additionally, his own *Concerto for Flute, Harp and Orchestra*.

Simply by looking at the titles of his compositions – concerto, string quartet, sonata, etc., it becomes evident how traditional Liebermann really is. He even uses opus numbers. Some modernists would argue that his style is reactionary, but in the end, does it really matter? His works clearly enjoy much success and he is reaching large groups of audiences here and now.

In a *New York Times* article, K. Robert Schwartz quotes Liebermann: "I was studying Berio and Nono, and learning to play the Boulez Second Piano Sonata, and suddenly I said to myself, 'I'm really not enjoying this music.'" Liebermann knew that he was taking a risk but nevertheless chose to stay true to himself. Critics have compared his fully romantic *Piano Concerto No. 2* to the concerti of Rachmaninoff. The reason Liebermann’s music is so well received by audiences is because it appeals to people. Further in the article, Schwartz mentions the fact that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is based on a twelve-tone row used tonally. The tonality of each of the twelve scenes is based on the next pitch of the row. The row is also the motif associated with Dorian and his picture, therefore acting as a unifying device on both the large and small scale. Just because Liebermann’s music is accessible doesn’t mean that it lacks intellectual devices.

Robert Reilly describes the overall compositional tendencies in America as very practical, like its people (Reilly 205). The most successful American composers are the ones that want to showcase the beauty of melody, harmony and texture, like Barber and Copland, for example. Even though, for a short while, many composers abandoned these elements under the strong influence of Schoenberg and his atonal school, American music has quickly returned to the use of melody and harmony, distancing itself from Schoenberg's school. During his studies, Liebermann went through the same process. The practicality of his music is proven through numerous performances by highly established musicians of today.

Struwwelpeterlieder op.51 (1996)

This charming song cycle was premiered in Warwick, New York, with Susan Mello, soprano, Marka Gustavsson, viola and the composer himself at the piano. It is inspired by a German children's book that was published in 1845 – *Struwwelpeter* by Heinrich Hoffmann, commonly translated in America as “Shockheaded Peter.” The book has ten illustrated stories written in rhyme. The stories are about children and the disastrous consequences of their misbehavior, described in a very exaggerated manner. Liebermann knew these stories from his childhood since his mother was German and she had an old copy of the book. He chose to set three of these stories — numbers four, five and six in the book — in their original language of German. The fifth story is the only one that doesn't relate directly to children. Maybe that is why Liebermann changed the order and chose to end the cycle with it, because it lightens up the morbidity of the previous two.

All three songs are laid out in three big sections: slow – fast – slow. The two slow sections correspond in character and musical material. The first one serves to set the story, and the last one explains the consequences of misbehavior. All the action happens in the middle, fast section.

Die gar traurige Geschichte mit dem Feuerzeug (The Very Sad Story with the Matches) is about a girl who plays with matches while her parents are gone and ends up burning to death. Her two cats try to warn her the whole time but she is too excited to listen to them and her dress catches on fire. The only things that are left of her at the end are her pretty shoes. The cats sit and cry calling her poor parents.

The song starts with arpeggiated chords in the viola, in C minor (the key traditionally connected to tragedy), and it sounds ominous from the very beginning. The piano adds to the texture with freely arpeggiated chords on regular beats and occasional added dissonances that sound eerie. The vocal line is straightforward and simple. In bar 7, the tonality changes to D major, and the vocal line becomes spritely when the narrator is talking about the girl's happy mood. As soon as she notices the matches, there are tremolos, arpeggios, and a nervous long trill in the viola, like a warning sign, while the voice still sings carefree.

A sudden shift happens in bar 20. The opening Adagio changes to Allegro and a persistent rhythmic ostinato between viola and piano gives away that something bad is about to happen. When the cats start meowing, the texture of the viola turns into tremolos and that of the piano into fast quintuplets. The material keeps boiling and moving upwards chromatically in a long stretch, and suddenly we hear the leitmotif of fire from Wagner's *Ring Cycle* at the point in the story when the dress catches on fire. This is one of Liebermann's quotation moments. The way he builds up the scene seems to go on for a long stretch of time, similar to Wagner's music. The use of chromaticism and fast tremolos correlate to Wagner as well. The scene continues with sets of different arpeggios in all directions, with some thematic material from the first section. Everything stops abruptly in a sudden Largo in bar 73. All the arpeggios end on the long E minor chord in the piano. The accented low piano octaves on a C disperse into silence interrupted only with the moaning phrase in the viola. The next section starts with a simple texture, over a C ostinato pedal and with the voice simply stating the facts. Then, one more time, the tempo changes to the one from the beginning and so does the texture.

This time the narrator imitates the sad meows of the two cats by sliding between the high pitches. The song ends the same way it started.

Die Geschichte vom Daumenlutscher (The Story of the Thumb-sucker) is about a boy whose mother warns him that if he doesn't keep his thumbs out of his mouth while she's gone, a tailor with scissors will appear and cut them off. That is exactly what happens.

The first two bars are like a recitative written in 5/4. The rest of the song is in 4/4. The song is based on a "threatening motif" of quick repeated notes followed by a sad two-note cry in the viola. These two motifs appear throughout the song, varied in the middle section. The section where the mother describes what will happen to the boy if he doesn't listen to her is extremely tense, with slow chords building up in the piano and a steady rhythmic pattern interrupted with rests in the viola. The build-up is not done dynamically but harmonically. It goes on in *p*, until it abruptly cuts off with a short E minor chord in *ff*. Liebermann so perfectly portrays the feeling of being in suspense until something suddenly scares us.

The middle section is extremely lively, and everything happens quickly. The onomatopoeic word "wupp!" is set as a throw-off eighth-note on a high B \flat . The moment when the tailor appears at the door, another loud chord scares us, and viola starts a constant loud eighth-note ostinato with each note accented. The section when the tailor starts cutting off the boy's thumbs is accompanied with relentlessly repeating sixths in the viola and short, loud chords in piano. There is another onomatopoeic setting of the child's scream: "Hei!" on a long high C, after which the section calms down and ends on a C seventh chord in the viola – the dominant of the main F minor, which brings us back

to the opening material. After the narrator states the moral of the story, the song ends with the “threatening motif” in big fortissimo chords, like the final warning to all misbehaving children.

Die Geschichte vom wilden Jäger (The Story of the Game Hunter) opens with a folk-like tune doubled in the viola and accompanied by a dissonant eighth-note ostinato in the piano. In a short e-mail correspondence with the composer on November 6th, 2017, Mr. Liebermann clarified that this is not an actual German folk tune, but a quotation from the hunting scene of his own opera, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

The story is about a hunter who goes to kill a rabbit but falls asleep. The rabbit steals his rifle and fires a shot that wakes the hunter up. The hunter runs away and falls into a well. The rabbit fires another shot that cuts the hunter’s wife’s coffee cup in two. The woman screams and the coffee spills on the nose of the baby rabbit, hiding behind the well, and it burns him.

The rabbit is represented by the bouncing, playful triads in the piano, each of them preceded by a grace note. The texture is stretched into longer lines and chords when the hunter starts falling asleep. His snoring is masterfully painted in the piano part through the succession of low tremolos in the left hand, representing an inhale, and the chromatic melody in the right hand that resembles the whistling sound of an exhale.

The fast section starts abruptly with a sharp pizzicato chord in the viola part. The rabbit stole the gun and wants to shoot it, while the hunter is running away to hide. The atmosphere of chasing is created in the piano part with a rhythmic pattern resembling that of a horse running. This is followed by the succession of agitated triplets moving upward and downward chromatically, with tremolos in the viola. The section culminates with the

loud triplets in the low register of the piano. These last triplets serve to slow down back to Tempo I for the last section. The material of the final section is taken from the first section. The song ends quickly, with the accumulation of short motifs in the viola and fast triplets in the piano.

This cycle is extremely fun to perform because of all the musical details and vivid descriptions. Even though the actual themes are not joyful, the character of the music is not dark and dreary. The experience is similar to watching a “suspenseful” cartoon in which nothing is really serious. Liebermann’s beautiful lyricism and brilliant textural changes in the instruments reflect the story so well, even more than the vocal line.

STRUWWELPETER by Heinrich Hoffmann
Translations by Lowell Liebermann

**Die gar traurige Geschichte mit dem
Feuerzeug**

Paulinchen war allein zu Haus,
Die Eltern waren beide aus.
Als sie nun durch das Zimmer sprang
Mit leichtem Mut und Sing und Sang,
Da sah sie plötzlich vor sich stehn
Ein Feuerzeug, nett anzusehn.
"Ei," sprach sie, "ei, wie schön und fein!
Das muß ein trefflich Spielzeug sein.
Ich zünde mir ein Hölzchen an,
wie's oft die Mutter hat getan."

Und Minz und Maunz, die Katzen,
Erheben ihre Tatzen.
Sie drohen mit den Pfoten:
"Der Vater hat's verboten!"
Miau! Mio! Miau! Mio!
Laß stehn! Sonst brennst Du lichterloh!"

Paulinchen hört die Katzen nicht!
Das Hölzchen brennt gar lustig hell und
licht,
Das flackert lustig, knistert laut,
Grad wie ihr's auf dem Bilde schaut.
Paulinchen aber freut sich sehr
Und sprang im Zimmer hin und her.

Doch Minz und Maunz, die Katzen,
Erheben ihre Tatzen.
Sie drohen mit den Pfoten:
"Die Mutter hat's verboten!"
Miau! Mio! Miau! Mio!
Wirf's weg! Sonst brennst Du lichterloh!"

Doch weh! Die Flamme faßt das Kleid,
Die Schürze brennt; es leuchtet weit.
Es brennt die Hand, es brennt das Haar,
Es brennt das ganze Kind sogar.

The Very Sad Story with the Matches

Little Pauline was alone at home,
Her parents were both out.
As she skipped through the room
In a happy mood, singing and humming,
She suddenly saw before her
A box of matches, lovely to behold.
"Oh," she said, "oh, how pretty and fine.
That must make a wonderful toy.
I'll light a matchstick,
Like mother so often has."

And Minz and Maunz, the cats
Lift their paws.
They shake them in warning:
"Your father has forbidden it!
Miau! Mio! Miau! Mio!
Leave it alone! Or you'll burn all ablaze!"

Little Pauline didn't hear the cats!
The matchstick burned strong and bright,
Its flickers merrily, crackles loud,
Just like you see in the picture.
But Little Pauline is very happy
And skipped around the room.

Still Minz and Maunz, the cats,
Lift their paws.
They shake them in warning:
"Your mother has forbidden it!
Miau! Mio! Miau! Mio!
Throw it away! Or you'll burn all ablaze!"

But woe! The flames seize her dress,
Her apron burns: it flares up.
It burns her hand, it burns her hair,
It burns up the whole child.

Und Minz und Maunz, die schreien
 Gar jämmerlich zu zweien:
 "Herbei! Herbei! Wer hilft geschwind?
 Im Feuer steht das ganze Kind!
 Miau! Mio! Miau! Mio!
 Zu Hilf! Das Kind brennt lichterloh!"

Verbrannt ist alles ganz und gar,
 Das arme Kind mit Haut und Haar;
 Ein Häuflein Asche bleibt allein
 Und beide Schuh', so hübsch und fein.

Und Minz und Maunz, die kleinen,
 die sitzen da und weinen:
 "Miau! Mio! Miau! Mio!
 Wo sind die armen Eltern? Wo?"
 Und ihre Tränen fließen
 Wie's Bächlein auf den Wiesen.

And Minz and Maunz, they scream
 so piteously together:
 "Come here! Come here! Who can help
 quickly?
 The child is engulfed in flames!
 Miau! Mio! Miau! Mio!
 Help! The child burns all ablaze!"

Everything is burnt entirely,
 The poor child from hide to hair;
 A little pile of ashes is all that is left
 And both shoes, so nice and pretty.

And Minz and Maunz, the little ones,
 They sit and cry:
 "Miau! Mio! Miau! Mio!
 Where are the poor parents? Where?"
 And their tears flow
 Like a stream in the meadow.

Die Geschichte vom Daumenlutscher

"Konrad!" sprach die Frau Mamma,
 "Ich geh aus und du bleibst da.
 Sei hübsch ordentlich und fromm.
 Bis nach Hause ich wieder komm'
 Und vor allem, Konrad, hör!
 Lutsche nicht am Daumen mehr;
 Denn der Schneider mit der Scher'
 Kommt sonst ganz geschwind daher,
 Und die Daumen schneidet er
 Ab, als ob Papier es wär'."

Fort geht nun die Mutter und
 Wupp! den Daumen in den Mund.

Bauz! Da geht die Türe auf,
 Und herein in schnellem Lauf
 Springt der Schneider in die Stub'
 Zu dem Daumen-Lutscher-Bub.
 Weh! Jetzt geht es klipp und klapp
 Mit der Scher' die Daumen ab,
 Mit der großen scharfen Scher'!
 Hei! Da schreit der Konrad sehr.

Als die Mutter kommt nach Haus,
 Sieht der Konrad traurig aus.
 Ohne Daumen steht er dort,
 Die sind alle beide fort.

The Story of the Thumb-Sucker

"Konrad!" said his mother,
 "I'm going out and you stay here.
 Be good, neat and proper,
 Until I return home.
 And above all, Konrad, listen!
 Don't suck your thumb anymore;
 Or the tailor with the shears
 Will suddenly appear
 And your thumbs he will cut
 Off, as if they were paper."

As soon as mother leaves
 Pop! His thumb is in his mouth.

Bang! The door slams open
 And dashing inside
 Jumps the tailor in the room
 Towards the thumb-sucking boy.
 Woe! Now going clip and snip
 With the shears his thumbs are off,
 With the huge sharp shears!
 Ah! Konrad screams in pain.

When his mother comes home
 Konrad looks miserable.
 Without thumbs he stands there,
 They are both totally gone.

Die Geschichte vom wilden Jäger

Es zog der wilde Jägersmann
Sein grasgrün neues Röcklein an;
Nahm Ranzen, Pulverhorn und Flint'
Und lief hinaus in's Feld geschwind.

Er trug die Brille auf der Nas'
Und wollte schießen tot den Has.

Das Häschen sitzt im Blätterhaus
Und lacht den wilden Jäger aus.

Jetzt schien die Sonne gar zu sehr,
Da ward ihm sein Gewehr zu schwer.
Er legte sich ins grüne Gras;
Das alles sah der kleine Has.
Und als der Jäger schnarcht' und schlief,
Der Has ganz heimlich zu ihm lief
Und nahm die Flint' und auch die Brill'
Und schlich davon ganz leis' und still.

Die Brille hat das Häschen jetzt
Sich selbst auf seine Nas' gesetzt;
Und schießen will's aus dem Gewehr.
Der Jäger aber fürcht' sich sehr.
Er läuft davon und springt und schreit:
„Zu Hilf', ihr Leut', zu Hilf', ihr Leut'!“

Da kommt der wilde Jägersmann
Zuletzt beim tiefen Brunnchen an,
Er springt hinein. Die Not war groß;
Es schießt der Has die Flinte los.

Des Jägers Frau am Fenster saß
Und trank aus ihrer Kaffeetass'.
Die schoß das Häschen ganz entzwei;
Da rief die Frau: „O wei! O wei!“
Doch bei dem Brunnchen heimlich saß
Des Häschens Kind, der kleine Has.
Der hockte da im grünen Gras;
Dem floß der Kaffee auf die Nas'.
Er schrie: „Wer hat mich da verbrannt?“
Und hielt den Löffel in der Hand.

The Story of the Game Hunter

The wild game hunter put on
His new grass-green jacket;
He took his backpack, powder horn and flint
And rushed out into the field.

He wore his glasses on his nose
and wanted to shoot the rabbit dead.

The little rabbit sits in his house of leaves
and laughs as the wild game hunter.

Now the sun is shining too brightly,
His gun is getting too heavy.
He lay down in the green grass:
All this saw the little rabbit.
And as the hunter snored in his sleep,
The rabbit went over to him unseen
And took the flint and also the glasses
And tip-toed away so lightly and quietly.

Now the little rabbit put the glasses
On his very own nose
And wants to shoot the rifle.
The hunter is terrified.
He runs away and jumps and screams:
“Help me, someone, help me, someone!”

Then comes the wild game hunter
At last to a deep little well.
He jumps in. He is in dire straits;
The rabbit shoots the gun off.

The hunter's wife sat at the window
And drank from her coffee cup.
The little rabbit shot it in two,
And the wife screamed: “Oh woe! Oh woe!”
But sitting hidden by the little well
Was the little rabbit's child, the baby rabbit.
He crouched there in the green grass;
The coffee spilled on his nose.
He screamed: “Who has burned me?”
And waved the spoon in his hand.

MINIMALISM

So far, throughout this survey of twentieth-century chamber music, there has been mention of almost all compositional tendencies with the exception of one, and one of an enormous influence: minimalism. During the 1960s, there was a tendency among certain composers to pull back from overwhelming intellectualism, complex structures and dense sounds, and to go back to the basic elements of music. Like many other composers throughout the twentieth century, minimalists were inspired by Eastern influences, although they weren't concerned with the active components of Eastern music, but rather, with its passive and meditative aspects. Minimalists drastically reduced the content of musical compositions through transparent textures, tonal simplicity, additive rhythms and constant repetition. The whole movement had, and still has, a huge impact on developments in music that ensued. The most influential composers were La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich and Philip Glass. Glass said that he wanted his audience to perceive his music "as a 'presence,' freed of dramatic structure, a pure medium of sound" (Morgan 433). This viewpoint is more closely aligned with non-Western ideals.

One important element of building musical structures in minimalist works is phasing: the use of two or more rhythmic or melodic patterns that repeat continuously at slightly different speeds (or they begin at different times); these patterns will occasionally synchronize before again falling "out of phase." Experiencing these repetitive patterns for long stretches of time could be challenging for the listener. That is because we are used to follow the music and expect different events while listening: rhythmic and harmonic changes, texture changes, etc. Through our experience in listening to pop music we are able to easily distinguish verses from choruses and to have a pretty good idea about how

long a particular song will be. Minimalism denies all of that to us, which can be frustrating to some people and freeing to some other people (Potter 8). The sense of timelessness or eternity experienced while listening to the music of minimalism is closer related to the non-Western cultures. Even the social circumstances in which the minimalist music was originally performed (all-night concerts involving the use of substances) resembled the music rituals of Africa and Asia. Perhaps the best way to experience these repetitive patterns is to allow the music to affect us as it may, without question or judgement. We could experience moments of excitement, boredom, annoyance, aggressiveness and many others. They seem to come out of nowhere because not much is changing in the musical flow. If we are able to let go of them, there is a possibility for reaching a meditative place where we are unaffected, and where we simply exist. The different results of our experiences while listening to minimalist music in relation to music full of events are sometimes attributed to different functions of the left and the right brain hemispheres (Potter 8). We experience time and organization through the left brain and less defined nuances and feelings through the right brain. Therefore, while listening to minimalist music, it is possible that we are engaging the right part of our brain more than we ever did before.

Minimalism has been critiqued by many composers. It has been compared to all the things gone wrong in modern society: constant meaningless repetitions of advertisements, selfishness and narcissistic tendencies of people and general passive consumption of everything that surrounds us. Elliott Carter even went so far to compare it with fascism: “one also hears constant repetition in the speeches of Hitler and in advertising. It has its dangerous aspects” (Fink 63). Kyle Gann, a minimalist composer, on the other hand

argues that minimalism was a natural reaction to the overly complicated music that accumulated in the years before. There was no other way to go but to start from scratch.

During the 1980s, minimalist tendencies evolved into what is known as the postminimalism movement. Gann describes this new trend as very tonal music, mostly consonant and based on a steady pulse. Musical forms are shorter, and changes of texture happen more often. Postminimalist composers are also influenced by popular or world music, and their favorite medium of expression is mixed chamber ensemble. But the influence is mutual: many popular artists since 1980s were inspired by the minimalist movement, such as the bands: Pink Floyd and The Velvet Underground, and the more recent, Coldplay and MUSE.

MARC MELLITS

In an interview with Marc Gresham, Mellits clearly explains that he doesn't like to label his music and pigeonhole it in a certain style, since he then feels that he is constantly expected to live up to that label. Nevertheless, in terms of compositional procedures and overall effect, his music is most commonly related to the postminimalist realm. Mellits' rhythmic invention and beautiful soaring melodies are simply refreshing and extremely engaging for both the listener and the performer. His pieces do not stretch over seemingly infinite amounts of time. They are brief, concise, and effective, and at the same time full of depth.

Mellits was born in 1966 in Baltimore. He received his training as a composer at the Peabody Preparatory, the Eastman School of Music, the Yale School of Music, Cornell University, and Tanglewood. Among many others, his teachers were Samuel Adler, Martin Bresnick, Joseph Schwantner and Steven Stucky. Since 1990 he has worked as a copyist for Steve Reich, helping him with the score to *Music for 18 Musicians*. Through this practical experience, he learned a great deal from Reich. Even though Mellits emphasizes that "my music is just that, 'my music'," he does acknowledge that the works of Reich and Glass gave him a certain validation to continue writing the music he wanted to write, instead of the music he thought he was expected to write (Margen Music Interview). Like Glass and Reich, Mellits created his own ensemble devoted to performing his music: Mellits Consort, which consists of violin, cello, marimba, guitar and the composer himself at the keyboard. He is also involved with the Common Sense Composers Collective, a group of composers exploring innovative ways

of creating and presenting new works through collaboration with different performing ensembles.

Mellits' works are being commissioned and performed by ensembles such as the Kronos Quartet, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Bang On A Can All-Stars and Canadian Brass. He has over forty CD recordings of his music. In 2004, he won the Foundation for Contemporary Arts Award. He is currently teaching Composition and Theory at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Mellits compares his compositional process to building a house: "There's a frame, and there's the underlying counterpoint and harmonic movement. Then there's everything you put on top of the frame, what we actually hear" (Gresham). He tends to compose from the middle outward, adding and shifting details along the way, while always being practical and keeping in mind his performers and his audience. Mellits says that he loves listening to the accompaniment in music and in his own works, is trying to achieve the "liberation of accompaniment" by bringing it to forefront (Grad). His favorite place to compose is Romania, from where his wife came. Greatly inspired by its people and the overall lifestyle, he tries to spend as much time there as possible.

Another (quite amusing) thing about Mellits' music is that his composition titles are related to food. In a phone conversation that I had with the composer on October 9, 2017, Mellits explained that he does that because he wants to give something short and descriptive to his listeners, like a "hook" or a "path," but not to tell them what the piece is about. It's up to the audience to figure it out for themselves. The reason he chooses food for his titles is because he loves cooking and he compares it to composing: "I love the way the ingredients combine in food and music. It's a soup of sound!"

Platter of Discontent (2004)

Written for a mixed chamber ensemble: flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, cello, marimba and piano, this piece has six short movements with most unusual titles: *The Seduction of Brie*, *Roasting Petunia*, *Standing at the Gates of Orange Wheat*, *Paranoid Cheese*, *Jello Infusion* and *Freedom of the Eggs*.

When I first encountered *Platter of Discontent* several years ago, I instantly fell in love with it. The colors of the instruments blending so well and the rhythmic drive that is at the core of this music made performing it a magnificent experience for me. I continued thinking about this piece for years. I never understood what its titles were about, even though I loved them, and I kept trying to create images of food personalities based on this music. Not until I spoke with the composer did I understand that the theme of this piece is much deeper than I ever could have imagined.

Mellits explained that *Platter* is dedicated to a very dear friend of his, a woman named Kristi McKay. He described her as a wonderful, genuine person with a joyful spirit and a very dark past. She is a woman who grew up on a rural farm in upstate New York, where, for about ten years, she was heavily abused by her father and her older brother. She also had a younger brother and a younger sister. When the abuse started shifting towards her sister, McKay decided that it was enough. She did what she could to prevent her sister going through the same experience. Mellits was deeply moved by McKay's story, especially because, when she shared it with him, they had just met. Not only had she opened up to him about her dark past, but she was also one of the most positive and happy individuals he had ever met. The power of her positive spirit was what got her out of her awful circumstances and allowed her to be able to help other victims of

abuse. Currently, she works in cancer research for children, but whenever there is a child abuse case, she is the first person called by the police to help with talking to the victims.

How do the titles of the piece relate to the story? Mellits says that McKay came up with some of them. The main title was a phrase that she told her husband at the end of one of their fights: “I give you this platter of discontent...” The story of the title for the second movement, *Roasting Petunia* is an event from McKay’s childhood. On her farm, she had a pet pig called Petunia. At one point, McKay hadn’t seen Petunia for several days. When she asked her father where the pig was, he answered: “What do you think you had for dinner?” The main motif of this movement is a constant circling motion of quarter-notes, like roasting Petunia turning on a spitfire. *Standing at the Gates of Orange Wheat* is the image of McKay standing at the wooden fence in her backyard, imagining her freedom. The ecstatic, “emotionally bold” *Freedom of the Eggs* is the representation of her spirit screaming: “This is my mind and my body! You can’t have any of it!”

Mellits didn’t want to write dark and heavy music for a dark and heavy theme. He wanted to “take seeds of the horrific story and make something beautiful, instead of ugly and violent.” After all, this is what McKay has done with her own life.

Mellits is very clear with his notation. The meter often changes throughout the piece, and if it’s a complex rhythm, like 7/8, Mellits marks the inner division of it. Music is generally based on constant perpetual motion, with accents in different instruments that are dispersed throughout the texture. There is usually at least one steady element of the texture and the other ones keep shifting around it (ex.: the opening motif of *Roasting Petunia*, with the occasionally added off-beat notes, resulting in the creation of a melodic

pattern). Even though the music requires mechanical precision in performance, its effect is not mechanical at all, because the sonorities are rich and warm.

In *The Seduction of Brie*, Mellits develops different patterns within the same metric phrase by changing small details each time. From letter A to B in the score, there are five vertical patterns of all the corresponding eighth-notes notes, with the constant ostinato note in both piano and marimba. The patterns are always the same, but they come in a different order. Mellits plays with our perception by changing the order ever so slightly in each bar. It never repeats the same way, even though our ear tends to assume that it will. This movement is in the tonality of E minor.

In *Roasting Petunia* Mellits plays with the opening circling theme of quarter-notes in 3/4, by extension of their “values” through repetition. He keeps the same pulse but often changes meter to accommodate the “added values.” The motif starts as a single pitch and then turns into thirds. The main sonority is B minor with an occasional A major contrast.

Standing at the Gates of Orange Wheat is based on triads with an added sixth. The sounds are warm. The melody in the winds is propelled by the sixteenth-note motion in the marimba and the piano with long warm bass notes. The opening motivic cell of two quarter-notes plus three eighth-notes is modified in the next bar by augmenting the three eighth-notes and turning the meter from 7/8 to 5/4. Mellits uses the technique of added values in this movement, while maintaining the baseline rhythmic pulse. From letter D until the end, the pulse gradually stops. The performers have to continue feeling it while holding the full note values. This is similar to the section of the sixth movement of

Messiaen's *Quatour*, starting at letter F, where he is constantly changing the duration of the next pitch and the performers have to feel the pulse of a sixteenth-note throughout.

Paranoid Cheese is the only movement without piano, and the only movement that was composed as a separate piece beforehand (like Messiaen's *Intermezzo* in *Quatour*, a similar coincidence). Mellits wrote it originally for two of his friends, a violinist and a marimba player, both vegans. He had a thought that if one were a piece of cheese in their home, she would be paranoid because no one would want to eat her. "You don't really think of cheese as paranoid, but it could be," is what Mellits said during our phone conversation. This movement is extremely lyrical, with long melodies in the violin supported by the cello and accompanied by constant tremolos in the marimba. The flow of time here is freed from the rhythmical drive of the other movements. Even though the score is only two pages long, the duration of the piece almost five minutes.

Jello Infusion is based solely on one note (D) and its rhythmic variations.

Astonishingly, this is not obvious at first, because of the masterful way Mellits composed the movement. Rhythmic diversity and constantly changing juxtapositions of the colors of different instruments keep our attention away from the fact that it's all just "one note that wiggles like jello."

Freedom of the Eggs starts with an extensive piano solo of loud unison eighth-notes in constant forward motion. The tonality is based on a pentatonic scale: A-C-D-E-G. Mellits marks: "*phrase somewhere in between bold and funky; quasi machine-like, yet groovy; mean and **accented**; aggressive; play funky!*" The challenge for the pianist is to stay relaxed and to find larger groupings and phrases within constant and repetitive motion. Otherwise, the hands could lock. At letter A, marimba comes in with a totally

different sound world, even though the material is the same as previously. The strings join in pizzicato, outlining the “melodic” notes that give shape to the phrase. It sounds less like a machine. The piano suddenly rushes in with a *f* in letter D, this time with a pentatonic scale starting on D, while marimba stays in A. The woodwinds enter with their interrupted lines in different intervals between each other, similarly to the strings. Now all the instruments, in full bloom, strive forward towards the end of the piece through perpetual motion, developments of the opening material, addition and subtraction of motifs and numerous modulations of the pentatonic scale. The culmination of the piece is achieved through repetition of a shorter ostinato pattern, in the main tonality of A, with a constant crescendo to *fff*.

In general, Mellits writes idiomatically for the instruments. He uses traditional markings such as “sul ponticello,” “col legno,” “arco,” etc. The only exception is in the fifth movement, in which violin and cello begin with a “slap,” which is followed later on in letter D by flute and clarinet using the “slap-tongue” technique. He marks the option of “noise” or “harmonic attack” for flute.

Even without the fascinating background story, the *Platter* is extremely communicative, because of its rhythmic drive, instrumentation and warm sonorities. The movements are brief, and the titles are easy to remember. Mellits seems to be able to get his message across with clarity, brevity and loads of fun.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Looking back at all the styles discussed here, it becomes clear how rich and diverse the era of the past hundred years has been. The music from the early twentieth century, still full of romantic, lush harmonies and filled with emotion, became distilled into fragments, through the efforts of impressionists. It was now less emotional and more contained, but full of color. Then, the expressionists broke it into small particles that were organized through serial techniques and mathematical rules. After World War II, the focus shifted to America. Since the technological developments made electronic instruments possible, all kinds of experiments came into play so that the composers even took on the roles of performers themselves. They were experimenting with sound, new techniques and new devices. Eventually, minimalists brought us back to the basic elements on which music before the twentieth century was based: rhythm, melody and harmony. Naturally, composers started coming back to tonality, while experimenting with both the new possibilities and previous traditions. Since there is no strong current or one trend to follow, there seems to be no mistake. Composers are enabled to find their own expression, whether it's the one that incorporates non-classical music styles, such as bluegrass, jazz or blues (Bolcom), the one that is reflecting on old traditions in a new light (Liebermann) or the one that is as accessible as mainstream rock and pop music (Mellits).

Bolcom said that the young composers of today are not afraid to mix popular and traditional genres in their compositions (Schwartz 483). My experience of the past five years performing with Contemporaneous proves so. New works involve more technology and more amplified instruments than ever before. Often, I play on a keyboard instead of

an actual piano, or change from one to the other throughout a given piece. Very often, there is a drum set, an electric guitar, an electric bass or a saxophone in the ensemble, and vocalists are using microphones. Sometimes, even more unusual instruments appear, such as the banjo, vacuum tube, or even junk-car parts used as percussion (Sean Friar: Clunker Concerto). Contemporary classical music sounds as if it is written in a popular idiom for traditional instruments. On the other hand, popular artists such as Pink Floyd, MUSE or Symphony X, are incorporating ideas, textures, sonorities, and sometimes even complete quotations, from classical music. Today's composers seem to be interested in finding a common ground between classical and popular music, since the division and the stigma that grew between the two (classical music is generally regarded as high-class and popular music as low-class) didn't have anywhere else to go but the opposite way, towards each other. Even collaborations between artists of each musical world are becoming increasingly common. Metallica released a whole album of their music performed with a symphony orchestra in 1999. Contemporaneous has most recently collaborated with David Byrne of the band *Talking Heads*. Lastly, here is a quote of Marc Mellits' thoughts for the future of music:

I hope and strongly believe that music is coming back to the people. Contemporary classical music, western art music, has been away from the common man for a long, long time. Composers like Steve Reich and Phil Glass started to open up the doors and bring it back. I think we're going to see more and more of a morphing between classical musicians who are going down that road and rock groups like Coldplay or Radio Head that are moving back towards us. Somewhere in between that is the future, I hope. (Gresham)

Appendix A: Recorded Material

CD 1

Total time: 55:05

Recorded in Gildenhorn Recital Hall at University of Maryland, June 16th, 2017

Recording Engineers: Milena Gligić and Emily Robinson

Editing: Filip Madžunkov

Mastering: Christian Amonson

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

La Mort du Nombre (1930).....[Track 1] 08:48

Amy Broadbent, soprano, Christian Hoff, tenor, Josh Henderson, violin,
Milena Gligić, piano

Quatour pour la fin du Temps (1940)

1. Liturgie de cristal.....[Track 2] 03:31
2. Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps.....[Track 3] 05:16
3. Abîme des oiseaux.....[Track 4] 06:48
4. Intermède.....[Track 5] 01:53
5. Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus.....[Track 6] 07:42
6. Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes.....[Track 7] 06:50
7. Fouillis d'arcs-en-ciel, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps...[Track 8] 07:37
8. Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus.....[Track 9] 06:36

Josh Henderson, violin, Emily Robinson, clarinet, Ismar Gomes, cello,
Milena Gligić, piano

CD 2

Total time: 01:03:27

Live Recordings

Editing: Filip Madžunkov

Mastering: Christian Amonson

Lucas Foss (1922-2009)

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird (1978).....[Track 1] 17:40

Julia Bullock, soprano, Fanya Wyrick-Flax, flute, Amy Garapic, percussion,
Milena Gligić, piano

Recorded live as part of the Resonant Bodies Festival at Roulette, New York City,
September 6th, 2016

William Bolcom (1938)

Let Evening Come (1993)

1. Ailey, Baldwin, Floyd, Killens, and Mayfield.....[Track 2] 04:01
2. 'Tis Not That Dying Hurts Us So.....[Track 3] 02:07
3. Interlude.....[Track 4] 00:49
4. Let Evening Come.....[Track 5] 05:48

Lowell Liebermann (1961)

Struwwelpeterlieder (1996)

1. Die gar traurige Geschichte mit dem Feuerzeug.....[Track 6] 04:49
2. Die Geschichte vom Daumenlutscher.....[Track 7] 02:55
3. Die Geschichte vom wilden Jäger.....[Track 8] 03:56

Laura Mitchell, soprano, Elliot Isaakson, viola, Milena Gligić, piano
Recorded live at the DiMenna Center, New York City, March 28th, 2015

Marc Mellits (1966)

Platter of Discontent (2004)


1. The Seduction of Brie.....[Track 9] 01:53
2. Roasting Petunia.....[Track 10] 02:36
3. Standing at the Gates of Orange Wheat.....[Track 11] 03:45
4. Paranoid Cheese.....[Track 12] 04:52
5. Jello Infusion.....[Track 13] 01:29
6. Freedom of the Eggs.....[Track 14] 06:42

Josh Henderson, violin, Anne Dearth, flute, Brad Cherwin, clarinet,
Emma Schmiedecke, cello, Yumi Tamashiro, percussion, Milena Gligić, piano
Recorded live with Contemporaneous as part of the I/O Fest at Williams College,
Massachusetts, on January 12th, 2013


APPENDIX B

Messiaen's Modes of Limited Transposition


Mode 1




Mode 2




Mode 3




Mode 4




Mode 5



Mode 6



Mode 7



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